

# **POSTMODERN PERSPECTIVES ON CURRICULAR METHODOLOGIES**

## **PERSPECTIVE POSTMODERNE ASUPRA METODOLOGIILOR CURRICULARE**

**SOARE E., PETRUTA Gabriela-Paula**

University of Pitesti, Romania

**Abstract.** The present paper aims at realizing an analysis of curricular methodologies from a postmodern perspective. It deals with the postmodern curricular perspective on the didactic activity. The synchronic and diachronic approach underlines the specificity of the postmodern impact on the educational system and especially on curricular methodologies. Curriculum post-modernity is analyzed from a historical and axiomatic perspective. The authors propose the socio-cultural model of the society, with profound implications on the curriculum. There are reviewed the deconstruction and reconstruction theories, as methods specific of post-modernity which validate different models of organizing curricular methodologies. There are proposed several ways of realizing the didactic activities from this perspective.

**Key words:** curriculum, historical perspective, methodology, postmodern education

**Rezumat.** Lucrarea de față își propune realizarea unei analize a metodologiilor curriculare dintr-o perspectivă postmodernă. Este avută în vedere perspectiva curriculară postmodernă asupra activității didactice. Abordarea sincronică și diacronică realizată de autori evidențiază specificitatea demersului postmodern asupra procesului de învățământ și, în mod special, asupra metodologiilor curriculare. Postmodernitatea curriculumului este analizată dintr-o perspectivă istorică și axiomatică. Ca și determinantă asupra curriculumului este propus modelul socio-cultural al societății cu implicații profunde la nivelul curriculumului. Sunt trecute în revistă perspectiva deconstrucției și cea a reconstrucției, ca metode specifice postmodernității ce validează modele diferite ale organizării metodologiilor curriculare. Sunt propuse o serie de modalități de realizare a activităților didactice din acest punct de vedere.

**Cuvinte cheie:** curriculum, perspectivă istorică, metodologie, educație postmodernă.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Post-modernity, regarded as a cultural model, promotes a new way of understanding the report between knowledge and experience, between theory and practice at the level of human action. It means permanent reconstruction of the correlations between the main actions at the level of educational processes and their individualized development in extremely various and diversified psycho-social contexts and situations (S. Cristea, 2004, p.4).

With implications on the curriculum paradigm, post-modernity “designates a *model* of approaching the activity of personality’s permanent development and training, applicable in a certain stage of pedagogical theory evolution” (S. Cristea, 2004, p.3). This concept with a *paradigm* value presents two types of conditioning:

- *Historical* (post-modernity as a variant of post-modernism). A “repositioning of the pedagogical theory” in the context of post-modern culture takes place

- *Axiomatic* (post-modernity as a (re)analysis – (re)synthesis of a reference system).

We can better understand post-modernity in education by considering it a “rupture” from modernity. Unlike post-modernity which treats separately/differently the report between knowledge and human experience, post-modernity “promotes a new way of understanding the report between knowledge and experience, between theory and practice at the level of human action” (S. Cristea, 2004, p.4). This integrative report is capitalized at the level of the general theory of curriculum as being specific of the instruction theory. It capitalizes the interdependences between its main activities: teaching, learning and evaluation, actions which are contextualized by the specificity of the didactic relation.

On the other hand, post-modernity contributes to “consolidating the strong epistemic nucleus” of the sciences of education. It justifies and capitalizes, at the theoretical and methodological levels, the main ways of theoretical and practical fundamentation of curriculum paradigm.

## MATERIAL AND METHOD

The present paper assumes a historical, diachronic and synchronic perspective on researching the curriculum area. From an epistemological perspective, history must be considered a way of knowledge. Crossing it, the curriculum theory, methodology and praxiology gets in the profound area of its axiomatic dimension, emphasizing the continuities and discontinuities for consolidating the basic principles and their social promotion, at a paradigmatic level. This type of approach is specific of socio-human sciences and proposes solution at least as valuable such as the empiric research applied to the field.

In post-modernity, curriculum paradigm validates two different perspectives at the educational level (cf. S. Cristea, 2004, p.8-10):

1. The perspective of deconstruction which “encourages the detachment of several elements of the whole considered more important in a certain determined social and pedagogical context” (such as the educational reform, lesson curricular projection, evaluation theory). This tendency is also manifested at the level of “dissemination of fundamental pedagogical sciences to the benefit of other research areas, considered a priority in a certain historical stage”.

It leads to the impossibility of satisfying the essential needs of curriculum paradigm regarding “the necessity of the unitary approach of the education system and of the education / instruction activities, at the level of the interactions between objectives-contents-methodology-evaluation, between teaching-learning-evaluation” (*ibidem* p.8).

Deconstruction represents the post-modernity *method* of edifying a comprehensive theoretical construction, which can lead to equalizing post-modernism and relativity (E. Stan, 2007, p.33).

2. *The reconstruction perspective* which “assures the permanent recreation of the whole (education, instruction, education/instruction projection) enriched following the integration of disparate analyses in the new structure of the reference system”.

Such a perspective justifies the curriculum paradigm which, once with R. Tyler's works (see: *Basic principles of curriculum and instruction*, 1949), unifies the efforts in an axiomatic framework with a strong formative and functional role. It concerns the optimization of the reports between:

- a) Diversification-unification,
- b) (theoretical) knowledge-(empirical) experience,
- c) Fundamental research–applicative research,
- d) Hermeneutical research-experimental research.

The analyses formed by integrating theses components can contribute (cf. S. Cristea 2006, p.20) to reducing/essencializing the research area of the curriculum theory at a very clear and easily recognizable epistemic object at the level of functioning/organization structures of education in the context of post-modernity.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The socio-cultural model proposed at a post-modern level requires renouncing the generalizing narrations, proposing the multiplication of styles and diverse solutions for solving some contradictions of the post-industrial society between the tendency of transformation-stabilization, homogeneity-heterogeneity etc. It leads to the capitalization of the codes favorable of communication from the repressive one to the reproductive and creative one in an open space from a formal, non-formal and informal point of view (E. Stan, 2007, p. 5).

It presents multiple determinations on curriculum by:

- Stabilizing the fundamental concepts in the context of de-centered and intensive mobility of the information and communication networks specific of post-industrial society,
- Recognizing the coexistence of the diversity of opinions and interests multiplied at a global level,
- Affirming the main directions of evolution on a medium and long term from the perspective of curricular projection of education (S. Cristea, 2004, p.5).

Referring to an argumentation of an axiomatic type, S. Cristea (2003, p.221) analyzes the paradigm of curricular projection as representing a fundamental direction of evolution in education. It requires an area of concentration and extension which can be reduced to the level of the following components (*The International Encyclopedia of Education*, 1994, p. 1147):

1. theoretical fundaments which sustain the development of the correlation educator-educated in an open social context,
2. educational finalities assumed at the level of the system (ideal, goals) and process (objectives),
3. the contents selected and organized pedagogically,

4. instruction/learning methodology,
5. methods and techniques of evaluation/self-evaluation (integrated in the instruction/learning methodology).

That is why, as a fundamental direction of evolution in education, curricular projection presents an axiomatic value which is available at the level of the entire educational system, allowing for the orientation of the proposed activities towards permanent education and self-education, the premises of full capitalization of the educability potential of every individual.

In the work *The logic of education* (1970) P.H. Hirst și R.S. Peters present a post-modern vision on curriculum. When approaching the ways of curriculum organization, the authors present two forms: *modular* (disciplinary) and *integrative*.

The content units and activities modules can be organized around a set of objectives (with or without connection, as a puzzle) or can be approached from an integrative perspective (cross-curricular) when the objectives have a larger area of applicability.

The former variant can produce an artificial atomization of the experiences types the child is to have access to, whilst the latter variant can better correspond to the complex interactions present at the level of social experience. According to Hirst and Peters, it can be argued as follows: “the nature of the educational objectives requires a special attention offered to the systematic development of child’s understanding of the experience and knowledge ways which are independent and interconnected at the same time” (*ibidem* p.73).

Curriculum organization has to be based on the content units realized by grouping the objectives. The basic idea of these authors is that in the rational planning of curriculum we must have in view the way its context is structured, according to the objectives and not necessarily the methods or activities which can be realized. When curriculum organization can take place by grouping the contents in distinct disciplines or integrated units, the problem raising does not refer only to the efficiency of the means for attaining the objectives, but also to regarding objectives at a general level.

Positively, according to these authors, curriculum organization on the basis of integrated units, due to their complexity, represents the means for producing a significant and diverse learning. Therefore, it appears a relation of interdependence between the curricular objectives and their organization. Experience and knowledge cannot be assimilated unless the content units and the activities are created in close dependence to the public ways consecrated at a social level.

In curricular organization, following the clarification of the objectives which are to be pursued after establishing the ways of contents structuring, an important role is played by the activities methodologically described which are to be unfolded in order to attain the proposed objectives. It is important to see which are the activities unfolded inside the curriculum and how they contribute to attaining the final goals.

The perspective proposed by Hirst and Peters on defining the curricular activities is a very interesting one, enrolling the curriculum paradigm. They are represented by:

- learning activities (based on talent and experience),
- teaching activities (subordinated to learning),
- contents and methods,
- personal relations teacher-student.

All the component elements, regarding the objectives, represent the curricular model proposed by the two authors. In order for an activity to be described as an efficient learning process it should possess an object and a subject. They are represented by the student and the object of his learning. Such a process unfolds for attaining a standard defined at the level of the objectives in terms of final, intermediate or immediate realization. The learning standards are defined/determined by the pursued objectives.

According to P.H. Hirst and R.S. Peters, the teaching activity, as premises of learning, can represent a logical condition for learning realization if it is conceived without any connection with instruction. In the context of curriculum centering on learning activities, teaching can be necessary when experience and knowledge must be effectively transmitted in a systematic, deliberate and efficient way. Therefore, teaching activity is directly linked to institutionalized education.

As regards formal education, teaching appears as necessary. The same requests are not compulsory in the case of other forms of curriculum realization. The main function of school institution is the intentional and systematic teaching of the contents. All the forms of curriculum organization closely connected to school are intentionally planned both from the perspective of teaching objectives and activities and of teachers and school authorities.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the process of curricular projection, there must be established the most adequate activities generically called teaching, as well as the necessary conditions it should satisfy. Choosing these activities is made following two philosophical considerations: the distinction between the sequences of learning activity and the extent of their determination.

A very important aspect concerns the absolutely necessary distinction we must make at the level of *what will be learned* following the planned activities of teaching and learning, *the content* of the disciplines which will lead to what must be learned, as well as *the methodology* level of presentation form used for transmitting the content.

The first condition stipulates the necessity of clarifying the objectives pursued. The other two conditions reflect the complementary ways the objectives can be attained with. Once established the objectives which are to be attained, the learning activities, the contents which do not refer to attaining the objectives can vary, depending on certain contexts and can present and develop alternative forms of realization. Moreover, once the contents established, the ways of their

presentation can also vary. The same contents can be transmitted and processed by using a multitude of methods and forms of organization and realization.

On the other hand, in education planning, *the methods* have a double acceptation, integrating, besides their *utilization*, the exercising of *skills* with immediate educational value. Due to these reasons, although the methods used in the educational activity can be limited, curriculum rational planning does not presuppose changing the objectives, but finding, at any costs, the most proper methods for attaining the objectives. The objectives of the instruction, once defined, present a stable value attributed by the actors of the education involved in the process.

## REFERENCES

1. Cristea S. (coord.), 2006 - *Curriculum pedagogic*. Vol. I. Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, Bucureşti,
2. Cristea S., 2003 - *Fundamentele științelor educației: Teoria generală a educației*. Editura Litera Educational. Chișinău,
3. Cristea S., 2004 - *Studii de pedagogie generală*. Editura Didactică și Pedagogică. Bucureşti.
4. Hirst P.H., Peters, R.S., 1970 - *The logic of education*. Routledge & Kegan Paul. London,
5. Petruța Gabriela-Paula, 2008 – Metode interactive utilizate în cadrul orelor de Biologie în Strategii alternative de instruire, învățare și evaluare. Ed.Risoprint. Cluj Napoca. p. 335-340,
6. Soare E., 2008 - *Axiomatic Dimensions of Curriculum. Some Effects of the Socio-Cultural Model of Postmodern Society* în *Scientific Bulletin – Education Sciences Series*, No. 2/2008, Editura Universității din Pitești.pp. 171-182,
7. Stan E., 2007 - *Educația în postmodernitate*. Institutul European. Iași,
8. Tyler W. R., 1949 - *Basic principles of curriculum and instruction*. Chicago. London,
9. \*\*\* 1994 - *The International Encyclopedia of Education*. Pergamon. Oxford. England.